

Disaffected learners and school musical culture: an opportunity for inclusion

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ABSTRACT In order to understand why adolescents who fail in all other subjects can be highly engaged with music learning, a case study was conducted in a compulsory general music class at a Spanish public secondary school. In the context of this study, the students' general disengagement from learning seemed to be a reaction to teachers' declarative, textbook-based, teaching strategies. Contrastingly, the music teacher had generated student enthusiasm through an inclusive pedagogy in which the principle of 'music for all' created the expectation of the orchestral performance of arrangements for percussion instruments in 4 to 12 parts of pop, classical and film music by each class. The subject *narrative*, 'the goal is the concert', was shared both by the teacher and the students, and had been widely accepted as an important part of the school culture. Through observations and video-stimulated interviews with the teacher, the students, parents and administrators, it was found that although the group of students rejected the school *academic* culture, in the end they decided to work diligently to be included in the school *musical* culture.

KEYWORDS: *learning disaffection, music teaching and learning, school concert, secondary schools*

Introduction

Spanish secondary schools are becoming increasingly complex because of rapid social changes that are not adequately acknowledged by the consecutive curriculum reforms that take place each time a different political party comes to power following an election. Contemporary comprehensive classes are characterized by greater diversity than the normal differences in personal interests, cognitive abilities and academic achievements. There is a significant percentage of students who, without receiving extra help, are retained in the same grade, and in every classroom there are some students with special educational needs. Moreover, there are usually numerous students who are children of immigrant parents, and some of these students have not attended school

in their home countries or do not understand the local language (Defensor del Pueblo, 2003). Teachers' preparation for coping with diversity is notoriously deficient (Yanes González, 1998) because the current postgraduate training system¹ was designed in the 1970s for an educational context where young people complied obediently with adults' instructions. That context does not exist any more, and consequently the traditional transmissional mode of Spanish pedagogy often generates what Woods (1996) calls 'alienated learning', which results in learning disaffection (Marchesi, 2004).

The changing characteristics of contemporary adolescence arouse the continuous interest of the press (see, for example, Aznárez, 2006). Studies have investigated Spanish adolescents' cultural identities (Feixa, 2002), absenteeism (Rué, 2003), bullying in secondary schools (Defensor del Pueblo, 2006; Hernández & Sancho, 2004), and the failure of a school system where 30 percent of students drop out (Marchesi, 2003). Although the presence of an increasing number of disaffected learners is a constant preoccupation for teachers, little research has investigated how this challenge is faced in their classrooms, and particularly how music teachers cope with learning disaffection. By contrast, a few studies have analysed disaffected students' responses to innovative motivational strategies in school music education, in Australia (Dillon, 2005), the UK (Finney & Tymoczko, 2003; Green, 2007), Spain (Rusinek, 2007), and Sweden (Sæther, 2005).

Arts education is assumed to have a potential to engage disaffected learners, empowering them and helping them to overcome the danger of educational and social disadvantage and exclusion. Given that there is a need to provide research-based evidence of that potential (Kinder & Harland, 2004), I investigated the features of disaffected students' engagement with school music. This article reports a case study I carried out in a secondary school, in order to understand why adolescents who were reluctant to learn in all other subjects were, instead, highly engaged with music learning. The investigation was guided by three questions:

- What were the characteristics of the music teaching strategies that proved to be effective with disaffected learners?
- How did the teacher's beliefs, musical knowledge and skills shape those teaching strategies, in interaction with the institutional and cultural contexts?
- Why did the group of disaffected learners decide to make efforts to attain musical goals?

Research design and methodology

To answer these questions from an interpretive perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), I used a qualitative, instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995). As a case I chose the interaction between a music teacher and a class with behavioural and learning problems, in a public secondary school. The school was located in a small industrial town in Spain's Valencia region, and I travelled there four times from January to June 2005 to generate data. The appropriateness of the case selection was corroborated by the associate headteacher when, in an initial interview, she spontaneously told me that:

many children would drop out but are obliged to stay until they are 16. Few things engage them, and music is one of those things. To see what they can do, that they can perform in a concert, that they do it well, that they are applauded . . . is very motivating for them.²

I had previously witnessed the participating teacher's successful teaching practice, with general music students playing arrangements in up to 12 parts on chromatic Orff instruments and performing up to 10 concerts a year. As I wanted to know specifically how his strategies worked with disaffected learners, he suggested I observe a group in their third year of secondary school (14–15 years old). In this class, 20 out of 24 students were failing in almost all subjects, and, eventually, many of them dropped out of school. However, all of these students were enthusiastic about music.

Data collection methods used were non-participant observations of lessons and concerts (Bresler & Stake, 1992), analysis of written materials, non-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994), and individual and group video-stimulated interviews. This last method is an educational research technique that facilitates reflection (Burnard, 2004; Prosser, 2001). It consists of video-recording a lesson, and interviewing a small group of key informant students immediately after the lesson, while they watch the videotape. Later, the teacher is also interviewed with the same technique, in order to understand the matches and mismatches between student and teacher perspectives on what happens in the classroom. Other informants included two secondary teachers, three school administrators, four mothers and two sisters of students, and four alumni who had graduated and were working as primary school teachers. The observations were written as detailed fieldnotes, and the interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded. My interpretations were corroborated through triangulation of data collection methods and through triangulation of data sources (Cohen & Manion, 1989). Permission for the data collection was granted by the school administration, and the anonymity of the school and the informants was maintained throughout the study.

From misbehaviour to enthusiasm

The group of students I observed had received a total of 130 written reprimands throughout the school year for misbehaving, both individually and collectively. Each reprimand is registered in an administrative document through which a teacher informs the parents of their child's misbehaviour. According to nationally prescribed behaviour management regulations for all Spanish secondary schools, these documents have to be approved by the head of studies, and their accumulation can be penalized with expulsions from school for periods ranging from three days to a month. The analysis of these students' 130 written reprimands shows a group of teenagers systematically rejecting school rules. It also shows the despair of most teachers, who were unable to control the teaching situations in the ways they were trained, and unable to negotiate other behaviour management strategies. The reprimands document the following:

- Learning disaffection:
He does nothing. He is in the classroom as if he were in a cafeteria.
- Disruptive attitudes and boycott of the teaching:
She doesn't let me teach.
He throws erasers to his peers and interrupts often, impeding the lesson start.
While the teacher calls the roll he repeats the students' names mockingly and makes noises.

- A refusal to acknowledge teachers' authority:
She does not pay attention to my warnings to keep quiet. She started to shout at me. Lack of respect to the teacher. After giving him a written reprimand, he tore it and kept yelling.
He answered rudely, 'I won't go out of the classroom if I don't feel like it' when he was in a classroom that was not his, during break time.
- Open provocation:
He smokes in the classroom, with the window open.
He ridiculed me comparing me with a transsexual in *Big Brother*. Everybody laughed. He does not bring his learning materials.
- Violent behaviour among students:
He hit two schoolmates on their heads. He slammed the door.

Although the events described in the reprimand notes analysed above are extreme, it seems that they are becoming increasingly common in Spanish public schools (Defensor del Pueblo, 2006; Marchesi, 2004). The traditional behaviour patterns of students complying obediently with teachers' instructions still survive in the regulations but are not necessarily observed, and this is possible because the interaction between young people and adults has changed faster than our society is able to admit. The written reprimands document situations in which students exhibit a lack of respect, and even threaten teachers. It is disruptive to classes and upsetting for teachers to have students shout, as happened in this class, 'Fuck you! It's enough!', or 'I'm going to scratch your car!' Some students' behaviour reflects their knowledge that their only punishment will be a temporary expulsion, because they have both the obligation and the legal right to attend school until they are 16 years of age. And the other students' conceptions about learning – and even a teacher's conceptions about teaching – are challenged, when, after a short expulsion, the same defiant adolescent is sitting there again, repeating such disruptive behaviour.

In contrast, the transcriptions of my own observations of these students during their music lessons do not seem to belong to group of rebellious students but to a group of young people wanting to emulate a professional orchestra. The following vignette shows my fieldnotes of their final concert:

The local theatre is crowded with almost all the secondary school students. Class after class goes on stage to play the three pieces they have prepared. The youngest start: second year of secondary, and then third, and fourth. 3C is standing up, waiting to go on stage while 3B is playing. In the darkness, they whisper comments to ease their nervousness. The girl that is going to play the drum set rubs her hands.

3B ends and applause is heard. It is time to go on stage, through a door on one side. They climb the stairs, exhilarated and nervous. What I see is a scene that, for these teenagers, might have connotations of television programmes. A boy gives me a thumbs-up sign as though saying 'Everything will be OK!' After him a girl makes the same gesture with her two thumbs.

They are on stage, and I observe from one side. They wear blue short-sleeved T-shirts, bought especially for this occasion. They are all prepared to play. The teacher is not with them, but near me on the side of the stage. They play a classic piece extracted from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. There are rhythmic problems, but they continue, concentrating. End of the first piece and applause. They change positions with an organization that has little to do with the descriptions in the reprimand notes I read. The girl that will play the

drum set prepares to perform. In less than a minute everything is ready for the second piece, 'Accidentally in love', from the film *Shrek II*. She hits four beats with the drumsticks and they start to play. Everything works, despite some rhythmic gaps. Again, the teacher is not conducting, but stands on one side of the stage, close to me.

End of the second piece and applause. A new well-organized change of instruments while the teacher speaks to the audience, telling that the next will be the last piece the class will play in 'music as a compulsory subject'. It is the piece they chose while I video-taped, and perhaps their last experience on a stage. They are all expectant, and finally the student with the bass xylophone indicates the entry shaking one mallet for four beats. 'Verano azul', a one-minute arrangement of the music of a well-known Spanish TV serial produced in the '80s, sounds as a farewell.

Big applause, big smiles. They go off stage triumphant, while I discover that each T-shirt has the student's name printed on the back, as for a soccer team.

To understand this contrast between general learning disaffection and musical motivation, I will first discuss the teacher's ideas and pedagogy in relation to the broader context of music as a compulsory subject.

Music for all

Since the 1990 national curriculum reform in Spain (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1990), music has been compulsory in primary schools for six years, compulsory in secondary schools for two or three years (depending on the region), and optional for one or two more years. Although officially it has an academic rank similar to other subjects, music's real significance within each school depends on the work carried out by the music teacher. Furthermore, instruction in orchestral instruments is not provided by secondary schools, as in the USA or the UK, but by community or private 'schools of music', or by professional conservatoires. The first incorporation of music into the secondary curriculum in the 1980s had been a one-year music history course. This original focus on declarative knowledge persisted after the 1990 reform (Rusinek, 2006), supported by widespread use of textbooks. At the time of the study, the declarative approach had been endorsed again by a conservative counter-reform (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2000), within which the official music curriculum was designed as lists of theoretical and historical data. This reform ignored contemporary philosophical discussions (Elliott, 1994, 1995; Stubbley, 1992) and research (Altenmüller, Gruhn, Parntz & Liebert, 2000; Dowling, 1993) about the procedural nature of musical knowledge.

Besides memorization of verbal data, when musical activity occurs it includes playing the recorder and Orff instruments, and a minimum of singing, dancing or composing activities (Rusinek, 2006). But students' performances in Spanish secondary schools are rare (see, for example, Murillo & Bravo, 2005; Rusinek, 2002; Sáez, 1999; Sotelo, 2002), because musical learning is limited to classroom activity. Bruner (1996) suggests that cultural oeuvres have the potential to make cognition explicit, and at the same time generate group solidarity, and calls this potential the 'externalization tenet' of education (p. 22). The lack of externalization in mainstream secondary music might be the reason for a low engagement with the subject, which contrasts with the strong interest in music that Spanish adolescents display outside school settings (Nebreda, 1999).

One of the key points in this music teacher's pedagogy was that for a compulsory subject to be meaningful, students needed to have a 'visible' goal. Contrary to mainstream general music education practices in Spain, the music lessons in this school were conceptualized as orchestral rehearsals, as an exemplar of a praxialist perspective of music education with, in Elliott's (1995) words, 'a musical teacher inducting students into musical practices through active music making' (p. 285). Rehearsing for a concert became an *authentic situation* (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) where students, even with limited technical skills, were induced to think and act as professional musicians would think and act. They practised, rehearsed, planned, revised, moved instruments, went on stage, performed for an audience and, finally, critiqued the results. Some informants corroborated this authenticity: the teacher ('When you enter this classroom you enter the Berlin Philharmonic to work'), the head of studies ('They are musicians and he is conducting . . . The feeling perhaps is not "teachers in front of students", but all doing the same to improve the results'), and a student's sister ('It's like *Operación Triunfo*'s hallway!'³). As a builder of authentic musical situations, the music teacher had become, as Dillon (2005, 2007) suggests, a cultural manager of the school community.

At the time of the study, the teacher was 43 years old, and had been teaching for 18 years in the same school, with a civil servant working status.⁴ He is a saxophone player, and admired by his colleagues for his performances. He has a degree in music and has studied composition and orchestral conducting. Additionally, he has broad experience as a professional player, and as a wind band conductor. When after the 1990 reform, the Ministry of Education started to send the first supplies of Orff instruments to all public schools, many teachers kept the historicist approach to the subject. This situation is possible in Spain, because, although there are inspectors, there are no subject inspectors evaluating how learning is taking place in classrooms. Unlike others, this teacher decided to incorporate active engagement in music according to the suggestions in the new secondary curriculum (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1991), and started to develop his own approach. He quickly showed results, establishing a musical tradition of which the school eventually became proud. The associate headteacher commented:

Each time he organizes a concert, he schedules another in the morning or the afternoon to invite the nearby primary schools. When what he is developing is watched – because he really does it very well – the parents say, 'I want my children to attend this secondary school'.

Although this might be normal in private schools, it is truly an exception in a Spanish state school. The results helped him persuade the parents' association, the school administrators and the local government to provide the subject with extra financial support. Most music rooms in Spanish schools still have around 10 bar-tone diatonic instruments. The support this teacher received made possible the purchase of enough instruments for 30 students per class, and the purchase of their chromatic parts so that students could play 'real' music, and not just 'school' music.

Because of the rich band tradition in the Valencia region, there are lots of players of wind instruments, and some schools are starting to organize ensembles with those students who learn them privately (Murillo & Bravo, 2005). Although this is a good artistic achievement, these ensembles *exclude* students who do not learn privately

outside school. The approach in the studied context was neither a historicist one nor 'music for the musicians'. Instead, each class worked as an orchestra, and went on stage several times a year to perform. In this *inclusive* pedagogy, 'music for all', all students were offered the opportunity of participating in the concerts regardless of their previous musical training. The students anticipated the concerts, talked about them and progressively demanded new and more complex arrangements. Ultimately, it generated a school music culture that was shared by the whole community, including students, teachers, administrators and parents.

The concert as a goal in disaffected learners' musical motivation

How did this pedagogy work with the studied group, whose misbehaviour in all other subjects was documented in so many formal reprimands? The reprimands show deep discrepancies between the ways in which students and the other teachers perceived classroom life. When reading them from a non-adult point of view, it seems that the students really had fun baiting teachers. While reviewing a videotaped rehearsal, one group reacted as follows:

'We behave well!' they say in unison.
 'Now we cannot be told that we misbehave!'
 'It would be interesting to videotape the lessons of . . . [not heard]'
 'Or the Spanish lessons . . .'
 'Do you misbehave there?', I ask.
 'It's because we get bored.'
 'The teacher incites us!'
 'They don't know how to explain!'

As in any non-resolved conflict, eventually everybody suffered – students, teachers and parents. The head of studies maintained that a problem of contemporary Spanish society was that instead of solving their problems, people blamed others – although research shows that the 'blame mode' is present in other countries (see, for example, Riley & Docking, 2004). She explained that students blamed teachers, teachers blamed students and parents did not assume their responsibilities:

The teacher calls the father: 'Your son does this and that.' And the father answers: 'But I cannot control him!'

The complaints by the teachers and by the students in their other classes contrasted remarkably with the high motivation and high levels of behaviour self-regulation I observed in the music classroom. Bruner (1991) suggests that we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings as narratives. Between these students and those teachers other than their music teacher, there was a non-resolved narrative conflict. In the case of the music class, there was correspondence between the interpretation the students and the music teacher were making about what was happening in the music room. The narrative he constructed, 'the goal is the concert', fitted with the narrative constructed by the students. While reviewing a videotaped lesson, they commented:

'It's fun! Better than being there . . . with a book.'
 'You enjoy it.'

'Why do you enjoy it?', I ask.

'Because you [the students] are playing, and I like to play, I suppose.'

The students' enjoyment was fostered through effective rehearsal techniques and through a real-time evaluation of the students' attention, interpreting their expression and body posture. When reviewing a videotape, the music teacher said:

Look what expressions of happiness they have. It's interesting to have a pleasant rehearsal, and not to stay a lot of time with the same instrument. You assemble one, you assemble the other, you assemble the melody, and you already have three. It's the same, but you must keep building. If you don't build quickly . . . the lesson doesn't work.

His preoccupation with the students' correct body posture during performance was evident in the instructions he gave, from how to stand up to how to hold the mallets. This preoccupation was related to his six years of experience of taking Alexander technique lessons, and to his understanding that students are not just minds (Ross, 2004). On a few occasions, his concern for correct body posture meant that he would slightly touch a student's neck, arms or shoulder, to help him or her understand the appropriateness of a position, as Alexander technique instructors do. In addition, his musical demands were high, and were accepted by the students because each rehearsal had musical objectives that were concrete and reachable, and were attained in an atmosphere in which errors were accepted.

When reviewing the videotapes of the lessons, the head of studies and an assistant to the headteacher highlighted other features of this pedagogy that, in their opinion, made students behave differently, resulting in a highly 'educational' experience. It clearly motivated even those who were at risk of dropping out:

Vicente⁵ conducting! Vicente has thrown in the towel. He has talked with me, and he doesn't want to attend the school any more. But he says that the school is useless . . . It's amazing, because for what he intends – it is assumed that he wants to work – music is also useless!

The goals were short-term:

Because the time they have to wait to see the results is shorter. In other subjects you have to tell them that it is for their future, to enable them to do this and that – and these are goals that don't get into their heads. Instead, here, when the school year starts they have a goal: they will have at least two dates to demonstrate what they are doing.

It allowed students a feeling of learner agency (Bruner, 1996, p. 35):

In the other subjects they make a racket . . . However, here they are motivated. They feel they have a leading role.

There was collaboration and peer-learning:

And you have the proof there: that young lady is consulting this student about something she hasn't understood. In other subjects she would have said: 'I don't care!'

There was an expectation of success:

All of them can be successful in this subject, in the sense that they will all go on stage and be applauded.

And it fostered responsibility, because of the social nature of the activities and the engagement of each student in the class as an orchestra:

When they go on stage, it's the whole class 3C that goes on stage. Then, if somebody acts irresponsibly it is not that one student who comes off badly, but the whole group.

My observations of the interactions in the music classroom corroborated these features. Regrettably, the school administrators admitted their scepticism about the possibility that the other teachers would transfer similar approaches to their own teaching practices.

Another feature was the development of metacognitive strategies (Flavell, 1993), which are crucial to attain learning autonomy. The development of musical metacognition is exemplified in the reflections of the student who played the drum set in the concert, made while reviewing the videotape:

It's then when I said 'I'm going to concentrate on my part'. You can see that I don't hear the others. Very bad! I always go wrong, because my foot gets lost . . . I have the rhythm in my head, but it has to become more automatic to be able to hear the others.

Learning autonomy is an important pedagogical goal and a crucial issue when only two weekly sessions of 50 minutes are available for a compulsory subject. Learning autonomy was fostered through a well-sequenced development of rhythm reading skills applied on the drum set, and of melodic reading skills applied on bar-tone instruments. It could be observed in the students' ability to sight-read, to practise independently and to organize themselves in a concert situation.

The students had to choose instruments among different sizes of chromatic glockenspiels, xylophones and metallophones. Their only obligation was rotating musical functions – if they had played the principal melody in one arrangement, they had to play the bass or an accompanying inner voice in a new one. In an educational context where the national curriculum, lesson plans and textbooks leave students almost no freedom, the opportunity to choose what to play and what musical function to undertake was appreciated:

He can say 'you would play better this, or that' but you choose what you want.

During one lesson I observed, the students chose which instruments they would play in 'Verano azul', the last piece they would perform in their last concert, and then they started a brief first rehearsal, sight-reading the individual scores distributed by the teacher. The interaction was not typical of a general music lesson:

Instruments arranged in semicircle. The class is ready to play. The teacher is sitting on a stool in front of the group, and one student is going to indicate the entry of 'Verano azul'. 'Ready? Are you going to indicate the entry chewing gum?', the teacher asks.

The student, a beefy teenager, goes to the dustbin, throws the chewing gum in, and then returns to his position in front of a bass xylophone. After he indicates four beats, shaking a mallet, the class starts to play.

The result is not satisfactory. There are rhythmic problems because they don't know their parts well and they seem not to be hearing each other. They stop.

'What happened?', the teacher asks cheerfully.

They all speak at the same time, Spanish style.

'The mallets? The rhythm?', the teacher persists. I find it difficult to understand what the students reply, but he seems to understand everything.

'Amparo, play your melody.'

The student plays a bar.

'Three times . . .?', the teacher suggests, and the student nods in agreement.

The corrections are given at a high speed, to every student. The teacher-conductor speaks in short sentences to specific students, correcting specific details. Then he gives a generic indication, and a brief reminder:

'During today's rehearsal, as usual, we work part after part. Those who are not playing, what do they have to do?'⁶

As this vignette shows, the lessons worked as an intersection between school and wind band rehearsal etiquettes, where musical instructions were seasoned with classroom management comments. Some researchers are trying to advance general music practices by investigating music learning in contexts different from school. For example, investigations of the informal learning procedures that pop musicians use (Green, 2002; Jaffurs, 2004; Söderman & Folkestad, 2004; Souza, Malaguitti Fialho & Araldi, 2005) have generated studies that analyse the application of these procedures in secondary schools (Green, 2005, 2006, 2007; Sæther, 2005). Because of adolescents' familiarity with pop music procedures, Green (2006) contends, learning motivation can be enhanced and the meanings attributed to school music changed through a first hand, non-adult mediated experience of music's 'inherent' meanings. Conversely, the pedagogy described here was teacher centred, although not in a school sense but rather as a guided participation (Rogoff, 1990), during which an adult introduces apprentices to the usual practices of his or her culture. This teacher's pedagogy did not draw from students' mass-media musical experience as consumers, but from their lived experience of a regional culture. Although nobody in the group played wind instruments, they were used to seeing bands playing on the streets in the Valencian folk festivals, and to hearing conversations about rehearsals, performances and competitions. Thus, the pedagogy was not only consistent with the teacher's musical experience as a professional musician and band conductor, but also with the students' cultural expectations.

Discussion

The pedagogy investigated in this case study had characteristics that proved to be effective even with disaffected learners. The subject narrative, 'the goal is the concert', proposed objectives that were authentic because of their analogy with what professional musicians do – practising with their instruments, rehearsing in ensembles and presenting music to an audience. It was different from the traditional historicist approaches to secondary music in Spain and, despite using Orff instruments, it was different from the Orff-Schulwerk approaches, which usually limit musical learning to the classroom experience. Its pedagogic principle, 'music for all', implied that each class acted as an orchestra at least three times a year, performing on a stage. As it included all students, it was also different from other approaches in the Valencia region where, although there are students' concerts, these performances are restricted to those students who study orchestral instruments privately outside the school. Other characteristics were:

- Efficient learning sequencing: rhythm sight-reading was developed through drum set exercises that demanded an increasing motor coordination and

anticipated patterns that would appear in the arrangements; melodic sight-reading was limited to decoding the names of 16 notes (C to A' in the G clef), as a means for instrumental performance on school bar-tone instruments.

- Use of chromatic instruments: chromatic bar-tone instruments were used, in the belief that they were easier to play than diatonic instruments, as a keyboard with white and black keys is easier to play than a hypothetical keyboard with just white keys.
- Openness to different styles: pop and film music were included in the repertoire, in addition to classical music.
- Complexity as a response to diversity: instead of looking for easy arrangements as an answer to different attainment levels in the classroom, complex arrangements were written, with up to 12 voices of polyphony.
- Freedom of choice: students voted among the arrangements proposed by the teacher, proposed new arrangements for their preferred music and chose which parts they would play, taking into account a rotation of roles in each performance to get a deeper musical understanding.
- Attention given to expressive issues: articulation, dynamics and phrasing, and timbral possibilities were experienced through a systematic exploration of different types and materials of mallets.
- Body awareness: systematic attention was paid to students' body postures during instrumental practice and performance.

Bresler (1998) discusses how teaching is shaped by the interaction of cultural, institutional and personal contexts, which she respectively calls 'macro-', 'meso-' and 'micro-' contexts. The macro-context was the rich musical tradition of the Valencia region. The meso-context was an institutional setting that supported musical activity. From the beginning of the investigation, it was clear that the teacher's musical skills constituted a *necessary* requisite to attain the musical results observed by me, and that were so much appreciated by the community. His composition studies were evident in his sophisticated arrangements. His degree in performance and experience as a professional musician were evident in the practicality of his instrumental teaching, and in the musical suggestions the students received. His studies in orchestral conducting were evident in his ability to aurally identify mistakes in several simultaneous parts in order to correct them, and in the effectiveness of his rehearsal dynamics. His experience as band director was evident in the management of the classes as orchestras, in issues such as the choice of repertoire, role distribution, motivation of students as performers, assembling of the arrangements, and preparation of stage organization and concert performance. However, although the teacher's musical knowledge and skills were a *necessary* requisite for a successful teaching practice, they were not *sufficient*. Many other teachers, both in the Valencia region and in other regions of Spain, are highly qualified musically but decide to teach just what textbooks propose. As their teaching is not evaluated for the musical results they obtain in the schools where they work, some decide to find fulfilment playing professionally or conducting after their teaching hours. There was something else that motivated this teacher to look for his musical and professional satisfaction *in* a school. He not only had sophisticated arrangement and conducting skills, but he also wanted to use them *within* his teaching work in general education. Thus, his abilities fitted with the meso-context, which valued his musical skills and incorporated the concerts as a

significant part of the school culture. They also fitted with the macro-context, where music was present on numerous occasions, and where teamwork in music was also assimilated by students from working-class families to a more widely known team approach in soccer. And, besides this commitment, which is also observed in effective arts teachers in other locations (Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stott, Schagen, & Haynes, 2000), the music teacher was firmly convinced that his students were able to produce quality music, and that he was able to sequence learning efficiently so that they could be successful.

The reasons such a group of disengaged students decided to make an effort in order to attain musical results were suggested by the school administrators, who were knowledgeable about the problems experienced by all the other teachers. When reviewing a videotaped lesson, they noted that the adolescents appeared to be agents of their learning, could see short-term goals with expectations of success, and could get a feeling of self-efficacy that improved their self-esteem. They also highlighted that the social character of the music learning promoted responsibility and compromise, that discipline was attained through self-regulation of behaviour instead of reprimands, and that the teacher was perceived as a facilitator in achieving a shared goal. In short, the teacher's approach drew from the strong local wind band tradition, whose activities were familiar to the students. That familiarity helped the subject narrative (Bruner, 1996), 'the goal is the concert', to be accepted by all members of the school community as an important part of the school culture. And, most importantly, even the group of disaffected learners that rejected the *academic* culture, in the end worked diligently to be included in that widely accepted school *musical* culture.

If learning disaffection may result in social exclusion, then there is a lesson to be learned from this case. The opportunity for inclusion can start in schools, and music educators can do a lot for those young people who are running the risk of life failure. Moreover, this music education practice can also constitute a lesson for those desperate teachers of other subjects who still do not understand the social, corporeal and narrative nature of learning.

NOTES

1. For example, the initial training of secondary teachers in some universities consists of no more than a three-day course, two multiple choice exams and 100 hours of non-supervised teaching practices.
2. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish. I translated the transcripts myself.
3. A Spanish TV programme equivalent to *Popstars* or *American Idol*.
4. Teachers must pass hard competitive examinations to become civil servants and work in public schools. Being a civil servant means that the teacher will never be fired even for verified incompetence, however he or she will never be rewarded for outstanding teaching.
5. All names are pseudonyms.
6. The teacher interacted with the students in Valencian, which is a dialect of the Catalan language. The translation of the quotations is mine.

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